

## **Pandemic Influenza Planning in Aroostook County: Mindfully Moving Forward**

The Bio-Chem Committee, which is a group of community members, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), local hospital staff, the Emergency Management Agency and the Northern Regional Epidemiologist has been very busy. We began our planning efforts by updating the Hospital Emergency Plan that was developed in 2002. Revisions to this plan were finished in March. It is intended that this document will be used as the main document in the pandemic planning for hospitals.

We are currently working on the hospital plan using the federal Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) checklists along with the State of Maine draft pandemic influenza plan and the federal pandemic influenza plan. There will be a plan going to the hospitals next week that will include the initial criteria for their planning efforts. The hospitals will then take the plan to the hospital committees to get individual facility information incorporated. The committee feels that the core of pandemic planning lies in public health and hospitals. For this reason this part has taken precedence over other sections. The Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (formerly Bureau of Health) will soon pass along the templates for county level planning. We are fully aware that once this template is issued that it will need to be incorporated into Aroostook counties current template, but we feel that the content will remain the same.

Simultaneously, we are gathering information from the local Chambers of Commerce to identify businesses in the area. We are drafting a letter to the businesses and will be sending this letter along with some basic pandemic influenza information and the CDC checklist for businesses. This is to initiate planning on their part; we are offering to assist them in anyway possible. We want as many county partners working on their part of the plan as possible with the direction from the committee.

The County plan is also being drafted. We are developing a skeleton plan that can be a jumping off point to initiate the efforts in this area.

We are continuously identifying partners that we need to invite to the table for planning. We are adding these partners to our distribution lists for our planning efforts. This is allowing them to keep updated on the efforts that are taking place and identifying the areas of expertise that they can offer.

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